Sikand pulls off easy finish

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Body

Liberal incumbent Gagan Sikand pulled off an unexpectedly easy victory over his Conservative rival Ghada Melek in what had been predicted to be a tight race for the Mississauga-Streetsville riding Monday night.

Sikand was holding a margin of almost 20 percentage points over the controversial Tory as the returns came in.

The riding, with its slightly shifting boundaries, had toggled between Liberals and Conservatives since its formation in 2004 and had been expected based on national trendsto produce a razor close finish between Sikand and Melek this time.

That was despite controversy swirling around Melek, whose social media history included postings criticized as "Islamophobic and homophobic posts" by a group calling itself Conservatives United Against Hate.

Conservative Leader Andrew Scheer said Melek already apologized for her posts and he accepted her apology. Reports said Melek had been refused as a candidate by the provincial Conservatives in Ontario in 2016. Melek, a financial consultant who also had a history of anti-abortion positions, said she was not "red lighted" by the provincial wing, but withdrew her candidacy for personal reasons.

Sikand, a lawyer who beat Conservative incumbent Brad Butt by some 4,000 votes during the federal Liberals' 2015 surge through the GTA, was a joint chair of the Library of Parliament committee and a member of the Transport, Infrastructure and Communities committee during his freshman stint in Ottawa.

The riding is one of the province's most affluent and ethnically diverse with just over 51 per cent of the population being white.

Sikand, 34, ran largely on the national platform of help for the middle class, climate action and gun control.

He has also said he supports gas taxes to fund municipal infrastructure and new rail lines to ease GO Transit service through the riding.

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